The Sound of Your Voice

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/9901202.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Jack Crawford, Beverly Katz
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Soulmates
Language:	English
Series:	Part 3 of Hannigram Soulmate Collection
Stats:	Published: 2017-02-24 Words: 3,383 Chapters: 1/1

The Sound of Your Voice

by KareliaSweet

Summary

Soulmate Prompt:
You can hear once you meet your soulmate (the first thing you hear is their voice)

Notes

I had to do a lot of brain twisting to figure out how society would work with this kind of soulmate connection. I hope it makes sense!

See the end of the work for more notes

They only teach you how to say one word in school.

It's the first thing you learn after basic signing, they show you how to shape your mouth around it and push the air out to make a noise you can't hear.

Will practices every night, under his blanket with a mirror and a flashlight. He opens his mouth, breathes out, presses the tip of his tongue to the back of his teeth and releases.

It looks right, he thinks. And he wants so badly for it to be right.

When he shows his teacher, her eyes sparkle and she pats his head. (This is why it's mandatory for all teachers to have a registered soulmate).

Very good, Will, she signs. *Once more?*

Will takes a deep breath.

"Hell-o."

Mrs. Verger-Bloom smiles.

Once he's mastered it, Will says hello to everyone he meets. He really hopes he finds his soulmate early. He doesn't want to be deaf his whole life like his father. Not that he minds being deaf - having never heard anything, he can't miss what he doesn't have - but it's the knowledge that his father never found that missing part of himself that pokes a little ache in Will's heart.

His Dad deserves so much more.

So he says hello to everyone for the both of them, tugging on his father's hand every time.

You don't have to son, his father signs, *it's a little late for me.*

It's never too late for love! Will replies with a gap-toothed smile.

His father says a prayer that his son never loses that sweet hopeful innocence, but he's pretty sure no-one's listening.

-x-

It isn't a sudden giving up, but more of a very slow wearing-down. First comes Will's mother's death - reported distantly from a third source. She died hearing, his aunt tells his father, and that scrapes at something bitter inside him.

Then comes his father's prolonged and painful illness. He dies by Will's side, and Will cries silent tears, knowing he'll never hear his father's voice.

He doesn't give up hope though. He's only nineteen. He's got time. He still says 'hello' to everyone he meets. (He went through a period in high school when he only said hello to the

girls, but that habit dropped the moment he met Matthew. He may not have been Will's soulmate but he knew how to kiss like a dream).

He finishes college and still he doesn't find anyone. He goes to grad school with his hope depleted but still holding. He doesn't say hello all the time, but he does his best. Some days it's just too hard, and watching the sympathetic faces of the hearing grates on him. Apologetic smiles as they hold up their I.D. bracelets marked PAIRED. They're not really apologizing, they're pitying, and Will is getting really fucking sick of pity.

Halfway through grad school he has the depressing realization that he's in the minority now. When he was a child everyone was deaf, but now people are pairing off left and right and expressing their joy at being able to hear.

You wouldn't believe how beautiful the sound of birdsong is, Stacey tells him.

Will smiles but he only feels the strain in his cheeks. He doesn't even care about birdsong, really. He just wants to find someone. Someone who looks at him and doesn't pick out his flaws one by one and examine them with distaste. Someone who sees the weird workings of his brain and thinks 'yes, you are mine' not 'what the hell is wrong with you'.

By the time grad school is over, he's stopped saying hello. He retreats entirely inward, shoulders slouched and expression combative. People begin to look at him oddly. *That's fine*, Will thinks, *you wouldn't want to hear me anyway*.

He adopts a dog. The dog loves him. He names it Winston, after his father. Winston is loyal, and helpful, and always gets Will's attention if he accidentally leaves the stove on too long. He's a good dog. Will decides that this is enough. It has to be.

Remaining deaf for so long in life helps heighten his senses. He puts his criminology degree to good use and starts teaching. His classes become something of a spectacle for lovers of the macabre, and his ability to pick up on seemingly minute details in gruesome crime scenes fascinates his more morbidly-minded students. He becomes rather passionate about his strange gift, although those less kind might call it obsessive. He pores over newspaper articles and cold cases, taking fastidious notes on the things that no one else sees. When admiration starts to creep into his research, he tucks it away hidden.

He starts to wonder. Can he see these things because he is broken? Is he broken because no one found him? Or did no one find him because he was always broken?

He doesn't like the answer to any of these questions. The bitterness that had started as a protective blanket hardens to a shell and he crawls inside it, lets the carapace form over him. He teaches, goes home, dreams of dreadful things, wakes up and teaches again. On the weekends, he fishes.

This is his life. This misshaped, curated life that no one else will ever fit into. He'll never hear the sound of rushing water, or his lover's laugh, but that's fine. Because they'll never hear the monsters that have taken root and rattle inside his bones. He stops being lonely. Lonely means missing something, and you can't miss something you never had.

Professor Graham becomes quite the legend in certain circles. His ability to analyze a murder scene is both impressive and disturbing. He decides to write a book on his findings. He calls it *Inside the Minds of Monsters*. It receives modest praise from critics, though the word 'disturbing' is scattered frequently through all the reviews. His students ask him to sign it for them. He always says no.

A month after his book's publication, a detective by the name of Jack Crawford knocks at his door. He's a wide brick of a man with a sternly kind face.

Your book got my attention, he signs.

Will shrugs. *I wasn't seeking it*.

Jack huffs. *Word on the street is you're kind of an asshole.*

Kind of? Will replies. *Guess I've been slacking off.*

Jack's mouth opens in what Will assumes is a booming laugh. He claps Will on the shoulder.

There's someone I want you to meet.

The 'someone' is an inmate at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane.

Why me? Will asks Jack. There are hundreds of authors of similar books, probably with a lot less prickly personalities than Will.

Jack looks away for a moment. He picks up Will's book and smacks it against his palm a few times, lip between his teeth. When he looks back at Will he seems almost sorry. He sets the book down between the two of them.

Truth is, Jack signs, *we need your help*.

-x-

The first thing Will should be thinking about Dr. Hannibal Lecter is 'this is an exceedingly dangerous man', but it's not. The first thing he thinks is 'fuck, he's handsome.'

He's read up on Doctor Lecter. A charming psychopath who served his kills to Baltimore's elite. His criteria for his victims was simple: Eat the Rude, a clever slogan that's already made its way onto ironic bumper stickers. Will has to admit it makes a certain amount of sense. Not that he's considered cannibalism as a lifestyle, but if he were going to… well. Rude people are dicks.

So, armed with the information that he's face to face (through a thick wall of bulletproof plexiglass) with a cannibal serial killer, he should be focused on the danger. He should.

But there's something about Dr. Lecter's cheekbones, sharp and austere, combined with these soft, oddly curved lips that make him hypnotically beautiful. And his eyes, so full of feeling and yet completely devoid of it. They drink Will in as he steps closer to the glass and Will feels uterrly consumed without saying a word.

"Hello," Will says, though he's not sure why.

No matter what Dr. Lecter has done, Will is certain that he has to have a soulmate. Someone who hid his monster perfectly in plain sight for so long, who made the opera and gala events his bedrock, someone with a face this hauntingly handsome has to have already found a --

"Hello."

Will's eyes widen in shock and every one of his hairs stands on end. He opens his mouth, then shuts it so fast that his teeth clack. Hannibal's eyes flash and he inhales deeply.

"Hello," he says again.

Will can hear him. *Will can hear him*.

He can't fucking breathe. Hannibal's eyebrows squint together for a brief second then he raises his hands.

My apologies, he signs, *I didn't ask how you prefer to communicate.*

Will stares at him. His hands shake but he signs out a reply.

I can't speak, he says, which is an evasive sort of half-lie.

Hannibal smiles and the bottom of Will's stomach drops out. This is his soulmate? How in the everloving fuck.

Neither can I, Hannibal replies, *But I hope to learn one day* .

Oh God. Oh God oh God oh God.

Will can feel sweat trickling down his back. His whole body is trembling. What the fuck is happening?

I'm glad you came to see me, Hannibal signs.

This genuinely puzzles Will.

Why?

I was curious.

About what?

You. You captured my interest.

I'm not that interesting.

I think you are.

Then Hannibal lowers his hands and tucks them behind his back. He steps closer to the clear partition between them. He moves his chin in tiny jerks like he's scenting the air and his eyes lock onto Will's. Will is trying very hard to be horrified but all he's feeling right now is a chilling mix of relief and fascination. He holds one hand up to the glass and presses his fingertips to it. Hannibal lets his gaze linger over each one, like he's recording each loop and whorl to memory. Will's hand flexes and he pulls it away. Hannibal unclasps his hands from behind him.

I enjoyed your book. You revealed so much about yourself.

The book wasn't about me.

Wasn't it?

Hannibal's stare is reeling him in. Will can feel something inside him flopping like a hooked fish, fighting and squirming helplessly against the inevitable. It's coming. He can feel it in his bones. Hannibal is going to pull him from the water and he is going to drown. He tears his eyes away.

Why am I really here?

Hannibal snorts lightly. *Didn't they tell you?*

Tell me what?

The smile that spreads across Hannibal's face is both gorgeous and bone-chilling.

You're my present, Will.

Dread creeps up Will's throat as Hannibal keeps signing.

I agreed to help the FBI with a current investigation if they set up a meeting with you.

I'm a fucking bribe?

You are a gift.

Of course. Of course they hadn't wanted Will's expertise. They wanted to parade the freak in front of the bigger freak so they could get what they wanted. Will turns on his heels and he hears Hannibal smack one palm against the glass.

The cameras are on. If they see him react to the sound, they'll know. He has to keep walking, he can't look back, except...

Except… that's his soulmate. Isn't it?

He takes one more step, then another, then stops. Makes it look like it was his decision all along. He looks back at Hannibal, who's staring at him like he's some sort of lesser-known God.

Please don't leave, Will. There's so much we have to talk about.

I have nothing to talk about with you.

You know that's not true.

No, it's not. He has so many questions, and none of them he can ask. Why him? Why now? Why is his soulmate a fucking cannibal murderer? And what does that make Will?

You're unique, Hannibal says, as though he's heard every question. *Just as I am* .

Will cocks an eyebrow. *If we're both unique, doesn't that just prove that we're not?*

Clever boy. Hannibal smiles. *But no. We're both unique in the same way.*

What way is that?

Hannibal doesn't say anything more, just puts his hands by his sides and looks at Will with eyes that pierce his soul and leave it bleeding out on the floor.

He walks away without another word.

-x-

The first thing Will does with his new gift of hearing is go home and listen to Winston bark. He cries into his tawny fur and Winston whines which makes Will cry even more. He crumples into a heap on his kitchen floor with Winston laying beside him, one paw on his chest. Will wants to tell him what a good boy he is, but he doesn't know how.

He signs up for a local Adult Speaking course the next morning.

The instructor, Mrs. Zeller, congratulates all her new students with a wink. They're all in pairs, except Will. No one comments on it.

He goes to classes for a week before Mrs. Zeller - *please, call me Beverly* - stops him after everyone is gone.

"Hey Will?"

He's still not used to people saying his name and he bristles without meaning to.

"Yeah?"

"Can I ask - where--"

"No," Will says, "you can't."

The words still feel funny on his tongue, but at least he's talking. He turns to leave, but out of the corner of his eye he sees the disappointed look on Beverly's face.

"I'm sorry," Will tells her, "it's..."

Beverly raises a sympathetic eyebrow. "Complicated?"

Will nods quietly.

"Well, if you ever want to talk..." She lifts her hands. *However you want to talk,* she signs, *I'm here to help*.

Will holds the fingertips of his right hand to his chin and extends the hand out.

Thank you.

Beverly nods and gives his shoulder a squeeze. Will pauses with a hand on the door jam.

“Actually,” he says, “there’s a word you can help me with.”

-x-

Jack visits him a month later.

I’m sorry.

Will sighs. The poor man is literally holding his cap between his hands.

You should have fucking told me, Will signs.

You wouldn’t have come.

You don’t know that.

Jack sets his hat on the desk and looks sideways at Will. *He wants to see you again.*

Of course he does. Will leans his hip into the wall. He doesn’t examine too closely the frisson of excitement at seeing Hannibal again.

Please? Jack asks, *I wouldn’t ask if--*

If you weren’t desperate? Yeah, thanks very fucking much.

Jack hangs his head. Will almost feels bad for him. Almost.

I’ll go, he says, *but I have conditions*.

The first condition is that there are no guards posted in Hannibal’s cell. Aside from the cameras, they are to be completely alone.

It’s research, Will lies, *I’m never going to get this close to a psychopath of his caliber again, at least let me study him properly. I’m doing you a favour as it is*.

Jack agrees.

The second condition is that he gets the first five minutes without cameras. Jack does not agree.

If he knows he's not being watched, even for just five minutes, I can get absolute truth from him. You've already got him locked up, he's not going anywhere.

Jack still shakes his head, so Will tries his hand at playing dirty.

You lied off your ass to get me in there with him the first time - and embarrassed the shit out of me in the process. You owe me, Jack .

Jack sighs, and it's the first time Will's ever heard it. It sounds pained and weary.

Fine , Jack signs, *I'll get you unsupervised - but only for three minutes. Five is pushing and you know it.*

I can work with three.

-x-

The moment the door locks behind him, Will is less than a foot away from the partition.

"I have three minutes," he says slowly, "do you understand?"

Hannibal nods.

"You can hear me."

Hannibal nods again, his eyes shining. He lifts one palm and presses it to the glass.

"How?" Will asks.

Hannibal tilts his head and his expression goes soft and overly fond.

"You know."

His voice is gravelly and works awkwardly around the words. He's as new to speech as WIll and hasn't the means to practice, but fuck, he's been trying and Will really wishes that didn't tie a rope around his heart the way it does.

"You're my soulmate," he whispers. Tears sting his eyes. He knew it was true, but seeing and hearing this proof in front of him, sharp and vicious, is… it's too much.

"Will," Hannibal says, and that sound - the way Hannibal tastes Will's name in his mouth, holds it between his teeth like a starving man - it strikes deep, all the way to Will's marrow, and he visibly shudders.

"Please say that again."

Hannibal shakes his head. *You first*, he signs.

“Me…? Oh. *Oh*.”

His lips hover close to the breathing hole in Hannibal’s cell and his mouth shapes out the word he’s been practicing for weeks.

“Hannibal.”

Hannibal makes a quiet, happy sound and licks his lips like he’s tasting Will’s words.

“Thank you,” he rasps, “Will.”

The word again pulses a shiver down Will’s spine. Why is he doing this? He can’t be -

Hannibal slides his hands down the glass and Will’s eyes follow them as he slowly pulls them away.

One day I’ll be free of this place, Hannibal signs, *and I will find you*.

Is that a threat or a promise?

Hannibal chuckles. “Yes.”

You know me, Will signs. He tries not to let his fingers shake. *Don't you?*

I knew you when I read your book. I found you, just beneath your words, trembling in the dark, begging to be seen. I see you, Will. Do you see me?

Will sees everything. God he wishes he didn’t, but he’s so glad that he does.

“I see you,” he says.

Hannibal’s eyes turn to honey. *I want to know every part of you,* he signs.

That shouldn’t sound so thrilling, it really shouldn’t. Will’s mind flashes with a collage of images.

Hannibal’s lips on his skin. Hannibal’s mouth on his neck. Hannibal’s hand on his cock. Hannibal's heat surrounding him. Hannibal's head thrown back in ecstasy. Hannibal’s fingers digging into his skull. Hannibal pressing his cool lips to the heat of Will’s brain. Hannibal opening his jaws and swallowing him whole.

Will’s eyes drift shut and he moans. He hears Hannibal whisper '*yes'* and it snakes into his ear and curls around the backs of his eyes.

Will’s watch beeps and his eyes flick open. *Time’s almost up*.

Hannibal nods. *Say you’ll keep visiting?*

Will takes a deep breath. He should say no, he should walk away from this mess of… whatever-it-is before he’s sunk into it completely. Just because Hannibal is his soulmate

doesn't mean he's bound to him in any way. He can live his life, hear birdsong, walk his dog, and be entirely comfortable for the rest of his days.

With no one knowing him at all.

No one caring.

No one to peel away his mask and say, *Oh. How exquisite you are*.

Hannibal would say that. He already has.

"I--" Will starts, but the words are sticky on his tongue.

Then suddenly Hannibal is stepping away and jerking his chin upward. Will doesn't have to turn around to know that the red light of the security camera is blinking again.

Well? Hannibal signs.

If he keeps visiting Hannibal, even one more visit, his fate is irrevocably sealed. He's so close to falling from the cliff already. There's only one sane and sensible answer to the question.

There's also only one possible answer Will can give. He knew it before he walked in here today, and he knew it before he ever heard Hannibal's voice. He knew it the moment those dangerous eyes met his and said *Welcome Home*. He looks at his soulmate and signs his answer.

I will.

Hannibal smiles with a teasing glint of teeth.

Good.

End Notes

tumblr @ lovecrimevariations

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!